

## VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4 X

Missouri is in substantial conformity with the systemic factor of Quality Assurance System. Information pertaining to the items assessed for this factor is provided below.

**Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.**

  X   Strength             Area Needing Improvement

Item 30 is rated as a Strength because CFSR findings indicate that the State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that foster children are provided with quality services that protect their safety and health.

According to the Statewide Assessment, all foster and adoptive parents in Missouri must undergo a rigorous approval process that includes a State criminal background check, a child abuse/neglect registry check, an assessment of the physical health of the family, and fire and safety inspections. Residential Care Agencies also must meet minimal guidelines for safety and fire protection for licensure. These include maintaining adequate sanitation, space, and necessary equipment to meet the child's needs and meeting licensing requirements regarding health care, emergency medical care, psychiatric and psychological care, and medication monitoring.

The Statewide Assessment notes that in order to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health, CD has established a standard that requires agency workers to visit children twice a month, with at least one of those visits occurring in the home of the foster family. However, the Statewide Assessment notes that the results of a Peer Record Review conducted in 2002 reveal that staff visited children on a bimonthly basis only 63 to 70 percent of the time. The CFSR case review

findings indicate that visitation involving weekly or twice a month visits was typical in only 8 (31%) of the 26 foster care cases reviewed.

The Statewide Assessment also reports that the Out-of-Home Investigative Unit (OHI) investigates allegations of abuse and neglect in all child-caring facilities, including licensed foster homes, residential treatment centers, licensed day care providers, and schools. As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, having a specialized unit within the agency responsible for investigating maltreatment allegations of children in foster care enables consistent, objective, and high-quality investigations.

Most stakeholders commenting on this issue during the onsite CFSR indicated that the State's standards and practices are effective in ensuring that children in foster care are provided with quality services to protect their health and safety. Stakeholders identified *Specialized Training, Assessment, Resources, Support, and Skills* (STARS) training, the use of FST meetings, and a rigorous biennial re-licensing process as effective practices to uphold these standards. State-level stakeholders also noted that the State has established safety outcome measures and standards for foster care that are tracked and monitored.

**Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.**

☒ Strength      ☐ Area Needing Improvement

Item 31 is rated as a Strength because the CFSR found that the State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system statewide.

According to the Statewide Assessment, Missouri has two direct avenues for quality assurance that feed into the overall CQI System. The first component includes the Practice Development Review (PDR) and the Peer Record Review (PRR). The second component uses outcomes and outcome measures to monitor agency performance and guide future initiatives. Outcome measures mirror the Children's Bureau outcomes of safety, permanency, and well being, as well as other outcomes such as the timeliness of initial child contact when investigating child abuse and neglect, adoption disruptions, placing children with relative care providers, and the number of family-centered service cases remaining open longer than 12 months

The Statewide Assessment notes that Missouri has implemented other statewide efforts to assess the strengths and needs of the child welfare system. For example, the CD sends out monthly client and foster/relative family surveys to receive feedback regarding the quality of service delivery.

As indicated in the Statewide Assessment, special quality assurance efforts have been established in Jackson County as a result of the *G.L. v. Stangler* Consent Decree. Jackson County now has an internal Quality Assurance Unit that monitors compliance with the requirements of the Consent Decree. In addition, an external Monitoring Committee reviews agency outcomes and identifies action steps regarding areas needing improvement, as part of the Consent Decree requirements. The Committee reports on progress and outcomes to the Federal Court.

Stakeholders commenting on this item during the onsite CFSR expressed the opinion that the agency has a Statewide QA system in place that effectively assesses the quality of services and outcomes for children and families. Stakeholders reported that the Practice Development Reviews and Peer Record Reviews are critical tools that identify areas of concern and promote resolution of problems. However, stakeholders expressed concern that there is a lack of “buy-in” with the continuous quality improvement process at all levels within the agency. In particular, some stakeholders observed that because front-line staff do not understand how their practice impacts agency performance, they often are not aware of the benefits of the quality assurance process. These stakeholders suggested that it is important for children’s service workers to receive feedback from all reviews. Jackson County stakeholders reported that children’s service workers in that county do receive feedback and that the process is effective.